AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1.   (Currently Amended) A method performed by a computing system, having a processor and memory, for reducing unsolicited electronic messages, comprising:

acquiring, by the processor, a block of tickets at a time from a ticketing entity, the block of tickets including at least one ticket having a value specified by a sender of a message, each ticket of the block including a code from a sequence of codes generated from a start code using a one-way function;

adding the acquired ticket to the message; and

forwarding the message with the added ticket to a recipient,

wherein upon receiving the message, the recipient can conditionally redeem the value of the ticket from the ticketing entity, and wherein a mail server is provided with an end code of the sequence of codes and determines whether a ticket of the message includes a code from which the end code can be derived.

2.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the acquired ticket includes a sender authenticating code so that a mail server that receives the message can authenticate the sender of the message.

3.   (Canceled)

4.   (Canceled)

5.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the tickets are added to messages in reverse order of generation of their codes.

6.   (Canceled)

7.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the recipient's mail system can validate the ticket with the ticketing entity before presenting the message to the recipient.

8.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the recipient's mail system can automatically discard messages with ticket values below a threshold value set by the recipient.

9.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein when the recipient redeems the ticket, an account of the sender is debited.

10.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein when the recipient redeems the ticket, an account of the recipient is credited.

11.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the message is an electronic mail message.

12-21. (Canceled)

22.   (Currently Amended) A method performed by a computer system, having a processor and memory, for handling electronic messages, the method comprising:
    receiving an electronic message having a ticket issued by a ticketing entity, the
        ticket having a value that is specified by a sender;
    presenting the electronic message to a recipient;
    when the recipient indicates to redeem the ticket, submitting by the processor the
        ticket to the ticketing entity for redemption wherein the ticketing entity
        receives an end code of a sequence of codes and determines whether the
        ticket includes a code from which the end code can be derived, and
        charges the sender for a value of the ticket; and

when the recipient does not indicate to redeem the ticket, suppressing the redeeming of the ticket so that a recipient can conditionally redeem tickets,

wherein a sender's account and a recipient's account are maintained by the same entity.

23.   (Original)   The method of claim 22 wherein the redemption includes decreasing an account balance of the sender and increasing an account balance of the recipient.

24.   (Canceled)

25.   (Currently Amended) A method performed by a computer system, having a processor and memor, for handling electronic messages, the method comprising:

receiving an electronic message having a ticket issued by a ticketing entity, the ticket having a value that is specified by a sender;

presenting the electronic message to a recipient;

when the recipient indicates to redeem the ticket, submitting by the processor the ticket to the ticketing entity for redemption wherein the ticketing entity receives an end code of a sequence of codes and determines whether the ticket includes a code from which the end code can be derived, and charges the sender for a value of the ticket; and

when the recipient does not indicate to redeem the ticket, suppressing the redeeming of the ticket so that a recipient can conditionally redeem tickets,

wherein a sender's account and a recipient's account are maintained by different entities.

26.　　(Original)　The method of claim 25 wherein the entity that maintains the sender's account transfers the value to the entity that maintains the recipient's account.

27.　　(Original)　The method of claim 22 including validating that the ticket can be redeemed before presenting the ticket to the recipient.

28.　　(Previously Presented)　The method of claim 25 wherein the redemption includes decreasing an account balance of the sender and increasing an account balance of the recipient.

29.　　(Previously Presented)　The method of claim 25 including validating that the ticket can be redeemed before presenting the ticket to the recipient.